(a) whether Government have received any proposal from the Government of West Bengal for reviving the ailing tea sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of the steps Government have taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (c) The Government of West Bengal has forwarded a copy of the Report of the Committee constituted by the State Government to study the crisis in tea industry. Major recommendations of this Committee include mandatory sale of 100% teas through auction, introduction of electronic trading systems at all auction centres, tightening of auction system to prevent proxy bidding, review of the sampling norms and capping levels, opening of new auction centre at Jalpaiguri, fixation of norms for rejuvenation cycle for tea bushes, grant of interest subsidy on bank finances etc. The recommendations of the committee are under examination by the Government.

Tea auctions

166. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to restrict the sale of tea through auctions;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the measures taken to bring the tea produced by the small and marginal growers to the auctions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) No. Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The small and medium growers produce un-processed tea leaves which is sold as raw materials either to bought leaf factories or estate factories for processing. The auctions do not handle un-processed tealeaves. The manufacturers (either estate factory or bought leaf factory) have the option to sell their teas either through auctions or through non-auction route. In order to encourage the tea manufacturers to route their teas through auctions, the following measures have been taken:—

(i) Tea Board has issued directions on auction rules for

implementation with a view to reduce transaction time and cost of selling and/or buying of tea through auction, ensuring competition in auction system, enhancing the speed of auction to handle maximum volume and faster disposal of tea etc.

(ii) Introduction of electronic auction to ensure greater transparency.

Closure of tea gardens

167. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of tea gardens have been closed/abandoned in various parts of the country during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(c) the number of workers rendered unemployed due to the closure;

(d) whether Government have provided any relief package to the affected workers;

(e) whether Government propose any comprehensive Plan to service the plantation sector; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. During the last three years, 96 tea gardens spread over West Bengal, Kerala, Assam and Tripura have been closed of which 41 tea gardens have since been reopened. The balance 55 tea gardens still remain closed at present. State-wise details of the closed tea gardens are given below:—

Name of the State	Total number of tea gardens closed during the last three years	Number of gardens re-opened	Number of gardens that remain closed at present
West Bengal	50	29	21
Kerala	22	05	17
Assam	17	06	11
Tripura	07	01	06
TOTAL:	96	41	55

(c) Total number of workers unemployed due to closure of the tea gardens is 28,195.